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ABSTRACT

To assist Canadian educational administrators and librarians on all levels, a project was organized to develop professional, flexible resource guides for the study of Canadian literature. This booklet, an introduction to the "Resource Guides for the Teaching of Canadian Literature," contains the rationale for the project, a brief overview of the materials, and a synopsis for each of the ten guides. Adaptable in function, and intended to suggest methods of organizing materials, the guides are entitled as follows: The North/Native Peoples; Coming of Age in Canada; The Immigrant Experience; New Land/New Language; Action/Adventure; Family Relationships; Quebec Literature in Translation; Images of Biculturalism; Social Realism; and Women in Canadian Literature. (MAI)

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Introductory Handbook

Resource Guides
for the Teaching of
Canadian Literature

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Introduction

This handbook is intended to serve two purposes: it is an introduction for those readers who are not yet familiar with our *Resource Guides for the Teaching of Canadian Literature* and, equally important, it is a follow-up document for the many educators from across the country who know of what we are doing and have expressed interest in our project.

We have included a rationale, a brief overview of the project and a synopsis for each of the ten guides in the hope that this information will help individuals and organizations determine which guides are likely to be the most appropriate for their specific situations and needs.

We anticipate that this material will also prove useful to educational administrators on all levels, to school, university and public librarians and to all kinds of students, both formal and casual, who are interested in the literature of this country.

We extend special thanks to all the participating teachers and members of the advisory panel who have done an enormous amount of work – the Writers' Union and the Writers' Development Trust organized the opportunity but the tireless efforts of these individuals actually brought the guides into being. We hope you'll agree that their contributions have provided a valuable entré to the astonishing array of literature that contains and reflects so much of our cultural heritage.

Rationale

It may seem odd, even sad, that it is still necessary in Canada to provide reasons for wanting to see the national and regional experience of Canadians dealt with more adequately in our school systems. But the fact remains, there *is* resistance and we must respond to it positively. The Commission on Canadian Studies for example, discovered many people 'were either uncertain as to whether such studies (*viz.* Canadian) merit scholarly attention or were openly hostile to any suggestion that these studies have a

legitimate place in the university.' While the study was primarily concerned with the universities in Canada, there is no question that this attitude is also prevalent in the community of educators associated with our primary and secondary schools. Given our relative youth as a country and the nature of our relationships, first with Great Britain and then with the United States, there are undoubtedly logical reasons for this view. At the same time it's useful to remember that an almost identical battle took place in the United States, with the same arguments on both sides, to see American literature taught in American schools and universities, as late as the turn of the century.

Be that as it may, there is a considerable, if moderating, opposition to the teaching of 'things Canadian' generally and Canadian literature in particular. This opposition most often springs from two broad areas of concern. First, the conviction that one should teach only the best, and Canadian writing isn't good enough; and second, a fear that those who want to see Canadian literature take its place in the schools want to see it taught overwhelmingly, as some kind of nationalist exercise, to the exclusion of international literature, to the exclusion of 'the classics'.

While it is our obvious intention to persuade and convince those who subscribe to these beliefs, we hope, in large part, to do so with the resource guides themselves, rather than with any detailed argument here. We do strongly recommend, however, the eloquent and thoughtful arguments of Professor T.H.B. Symons and the members of the Commission on Canadian Studies in the rationale to their report *To Know Ourselves*. While persuasively demonstrating the dangers and inadequacies of trying to justify Canadian studies on the basis of nationalism, the report makes an impeccable case for the need to study one's own place and experience, one's own culture, on the basis of what they call 'the beginning of true education' – that is, self-knowledge.

The following two quotations, the first from the commissioners themselves and the second from a submission to the commission by the late Desmond Pacey, speak directly to the question as we see it:

No one ... can fail to have noticed that those who would dismiss Canadian literature as a field unworthy of academic study have seldom made any serious study of it themselves. The Commission is prepared, however, to argue that there is now a substantial body of Canadian literature that merits such study for its own sake. Furthermore, the Commission wishes to emphasize that a thorough knowledge of Canadian literature is important, and even essential, to an understanding of Canada.

There is a respectable body of literature which has sprung from our own land, our own people, and what is more natural than that we should read and enjoy it? To say this is not to suggest that it should supplant the study of English and American literature ... But the first duty of man is to know himself. To know oneself as a Canadian, of course, necessarily involves knowing something of the roots from which Canadians sprang, be they English, Irish, Scots, French, German, or Icelandic. But to know oneself as a Canadian also means knowing what the human imagination has been able to make of this huge sprawling land, with its violent extremes of climate and topography, and of the society which has evolved here ... What one hopes to see develop in our young people from the study of our literature, in other words, is not a narrow sense of relevance nor a parochial kind of nationalism, but rather an enlarged awareness of themselves as another imperfect but nonetheless distinct segment of the human race.

DESMOND PACEY

A Brief History of the Project

Our project originated in a simple commitment to provide thoroughly professional, very flexible resource guides that would serve as support material for the exploration of the increasingly rich world of Canadian literature. The project began with a pragmatic assumption that the most direct way to create useful teaching tools was to draw on the energy and expertise of those classroom teachers who had worked independently to develop

similar materials at a grass roots level. With this in mind the Writers' Union of Canada, the project's co-ordinator and financial sponsor, selected thirty-seven of these teachers from across the country and assembled them into five regional work groups.

The content of the resource guides remained entirely the responsibility of these teachers – each group meeting at regular intervals over a twelve-month period to develop two topics that were chosen collaboratively. Once the guides were in draft form they were circulated for comment to an advisory panel of eminent experts with practical, rather than theoretical, experience in the field of Canadian literature. The critical feedback provided by this group was then incorporated in the final draft of each guide.

From the outset the project was alert to any regional bias in either topic or structure. The five work groups were assembled to provide nation-wide talent and representation and topics were similarly chosen to reflect national interests. In addition, by providing each work group with the opportunity to comment on the guides prepared by their counterparts in other regions of the country we believe that a truly national perception has been achieved.

We want to emphasize that the topics or themes of the guides were chosen to serve as methods of organizing material, as convenient ways of providing access to, and context for, as much literature as possible. We share, to a considerable degree, the reservations many people have about 'the thematic approach'. We know it would be unjust and foolish to teach, say *The Diviners*, merely in terms of 'Women in Canadian Literature'. The intention of the guides, therefore, was to organize and annotate a wealth of information without becoming dogmatic, predigested 'teaching kits' which would necessarily impinge on the creativity of classroom teachers. Thus all the guides are adaptable in function – there is no need to implement them in a fixed sequence or even adhere to internal structures as they are expressed by the authors. They can be used in a broad spectrum of curricular models serving teachers who want to develop year-long courses, as well as those who require only an incremental reference tool to

enrich existing programmes. In the final analysis specific uses will depend on local conditions and the initiative and imagination of individual teachers.

Obviously, we view these guides as a first step which will hopefully be superceded by the work of ourselves and others. From the outset it was agreed that the guides would all be subject to a continuing process of revision and expansion based on classroom use. We will soon be implementing procedures to solicit and incorporate suggested improvements so they can be included in subsequent editions of the guides.

'The mind supplies the idea of a nation, but what gives this idea its sentimental force is a community of dreams.'

— ANDRÉ MALRAUX

The North / Native Peoples

Prepared by the British Columbia Work Group

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This guide provides an opportunity to examine the important themes of Canada's North – both as a physical region and as a region of the imagination – and Canada's native peoples. While no effort has been made to force these two themes unduly into tandem they frequently complement each other in the obvious partnership between the Inuit and the Arctic and, to a certain extent, between Indians and the North.

An arbitrary distinction has been made as to where exactly the Canadian North begins, since our frontier has been moving steadily closer to the North Pole since the pioneers considered 'North' as anything above the 55th parallel. The decision in this guide, however, was to preserve the traditional notion of North that has persisted in the minds and literature of those Canadians who have never been there: the North of ice and snow and fantasy which lies still unconquered and virtually uninhabited both in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. In other words, a land that is as much a geography of the imagination as of the Canadian soil.

There are a multiplicity of ethnic images surrounding both the Inuit and the Indian. In an attempt to deal with them the literary selections for this guide are divided into three categories: Native, Native and White, and North.

1. NATIVE

Includes the native people's own descriptions of themselves, their

legends and histories. Often, admittedly, these are 'retold' or 'transcribed' by whites.

2. NATIVE AND WHITE
   Surveys the literature describing the various interrelationships between native peoples and whites from the days of the early settlers to the present.
3. NORTH
   Describes the love-hate relationships of both whites and native peoples to the land they know, inhabit and are frequently compelled to struggle against for survival.

Titles were chosen with both financial and literary criteria in mind. Where a book was not available in a reasonably inexpensive paperback edition, or where a book was demonstrably out of print, it was not included in the list. With the sole exception of *I Heard the Owl Call My Name* all books are of Canadian authorship, and with no exceptions, of proven literary merit. Wherever possible books were chosen that had already been 'student tested'. As a consequence only 30% of the listed titles in this guide will be entirely new to study in Canadian high schools.

Coming of Age in Canada

Prepared by the British Columbia Work Group

This guide explores the theme of coming of age in a variety of ways:

1. Discussion of the child's perception of the world and the process of change from mythic through romantic to, finally, the philosophic assessments of adulthood,
2. the study of peer group pressures and other social situations that develop during adolescence,
3. views on family environment and its effect on the growing child,
4. examination of developing sex roles,
5. exploration of the adults' vision of childhood and their desire to recapture the lost truth and innocence associated with it,
6. examination of the unique experience of growing up in Canada.

The richest source of material related to coming of age is the short story – examples cited here deal with parent-child relations, peer group pressures, work situations, cultural conflicts, and the inevitable confrontation with death and the harsher aspects of life. Of the plays selected most are appropriate at the senior high school level only. Poems were chosen on the basis of the quality of experience portrayed; they express a broad spectrum of viewpoints ranging from the quiet observations or reminiscences of parents to the profound, psychological analysis of the mysteries of awakening. The film section is divided into two categories: one lists narrative films, the other comprises a check list of documentary materials presenting medical, psychological and social content appropriate to this theme.

The Immigrant Experience

Prepared by the Prairie Work Group

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Immigration involves individuals in one of the most dramatic crises of their lives. They are uprooted from the soil that nourished them and transported to an alien land. Some emigrants abandoned their homes, environment, language, traditions, institutions and society. Often they saw what they left behind as decadent, restricting, lacking in opportunity, and even threatening to their physical, spiritual and intellectual life. These emigrants left in search of a new Utopia where all their hopes would be realized.

Others left their native lands with more reluctance and stronger

attachment to its traditions. They tried to move an entire culture and set of values to the new land. When they settled they found themselves caught between the pull of two worlds, the new land forcing them to either change and adapt, or to cling tenaciously to the old values, repressing the new forces which impinged on the old way of life.

Still others came as colonizers, extending the imperial boundaries of their mother countries – whether England or France – to the furthermost reaches of the wilderness. They saw their role as one of leadership as they struggled to establish the authority structure of a mother country in the new society.

The settlement of Canada is a story of conflict between native peoples and newcomers, between charter groups and later arrivals, between retainers of the old culture and the advocates of a new one, among imperialists, nationalists, annexationists, and even between immigrants and their own offspring. The Immigrant Experience is the story of the effects of these conflicts on the attitudes of people. Underlying this chaotic process of integration runs a pervading search for identity – our literature is itself a part of this search.

For the purposes of this guide immigration has been taken to signify the actual process of moving from another country to Canada, settling and becoming a part of the new land and society. There are a number of aspects of immigration which are not dealt with in the guide. The development of minority groups and multiculturalism has not been pursued. Movements of people within the country – for example the influx of Maritimers into Central Canada, the Easterners' homesteading in the West and the gold rush to the Klondike – have all been left to one side. Travelogues and journals appropriate to the theme have similarly been excluded, as have all materials pertinent to emigrant backgrounds. Although these aspects have not been entirely ignored, it was felt that a clear focus on the central process of immigration would provide a more useful guide to the literature which surrounds this theme.

Materials dealt with in the guide are:

1. The Novel – three core texts and eight alternates.

2. The Short Story – four core stories.
3. Poetry – four core texts with numerous individual poems.
4. Drama – one recommended text.
5. Non-Fiction – three recommended works.

Each section lists further recommended texts and suggests assignments for a variety of classroom approaches.

New Land / New Language

Prepared by the Prairie Work Group

Historically speaking, the English-Canadian writer has been faced with two overwhelming alternatives: the contained, cultural traditions of England and the United States, or the vast unknowns of the surrounding landscape. The language and forms of English writers, particularly those of the nineteenth century, fitted only roughly, if at all, an actual experience of the Canadian landscape. If Canadian writers chose to school themselves in the literary traditions of England they risked sounding precious, even irrelevant, in the harsh physical realities of their surroundings. If they rejected this literary heritage, however, and sought an authentic literary access into their own land, they were confronted with a land of silence that demanded a new, appropriate language.

Much Canadian writing has been concerned with the northern landscape. From the journals of the earliest explorers to the present day our writing has demanded a direct response to the land – an artistic reaction both varied and complex. In this guide selections mirroring this complexity and variety have been arranged into four categories of land-language relationships:

1. The landscape as unmanageable: the land as indomitable, cruel and victorious over the puny efforts of man to leave an enduring mark.
2. The landscape as signatured: the land subdued or possessed by man who feels the land not as an enemy but as an active partner in human desires.
3. The landscape as internalized: a realization that the powerful presence of the land actually re-forms the mind that comes to grips with

it. This interiorization of landscape may manifest itself as unmanageable or signatured, or else it may function as absolute symbol and accordingly lose its particularity of place and time.

4. The landscape as a 'languagescape' in which the land is adjured to speak.

In addition to these four sections the guide provides a 'Poor Man's Section' which gives a selection of works grouped into the four land-language categories above – most of these works can be found in existing anthologies.

Each section also lists appropriate novels, short stories, plays, poetry, non-fiction and film, and concludes with suggested assignments.

Action / Adventure

Prepared by the Ontario Work Group

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Betty Lamont
John Martyn
Jean Seasons
Barbara Sproule

In this resource guide a sizable number of Canadian works suitable for the intermediate student are organized into segments useful to the teacher. The titles have been selected according to the standard, applied with a good deal of flexibility, that each work have a strong, if not dominant, narrative line.

The works are set out in eleven units:

1. Growing Up
2. Violent Encounters
3. Historical Adventures
4. Frontiers

5. Native Peoples
6. Folk Tales
7. Animals
8. Winter Brutality
9. Sports
10. Mystery and the Supernatural
11. Science Fiction

Although each has its unique features, all units contain a table of contents, introduction, list of general aims, extensive listing (at times subdivided) of recommended materials, and a bibliography. The essence of each unit is the list of materials.

Items are grouped, by genre and author, under three headings:

1. CORE
   Mostly novels, these works are suitable for intensive study by the whole class under detailed teacher direction. Accompanying each title is a two-paragraph annotation – the first a summary, the second a critical assessment – which ends with a recommendation of the grade levels at which the work might best be used. Also included is a short list of suggested student activities.
2. COMPLEMENTARY
   These titles can be used extensively, perhaps to complement the core work. Purchased in small sets, they may also be used in combination with related works for small-group discussion by students under modest teacher direction. Following each title is one paragraph of combined summary and criticism, concluding with a grade level recommendation.
3. SUPPLEMENTARY
   These works are recommended for the school library, to be available for individual reading and research. Included here, or possibly under a separate category 'Related Materials', are relevant non-print items such as films and audio-tapes. Supplementary titles may have a brief annotation.

By no means definitive, the unit topics simply intend to illuminate various works by relating them. Collectively, the eleven units contain far more material than a teacher might use in any given year, hence there is ample opportunity to select freely from the titles and activities: to rework, insert, delete, tinker and mod-

ify at will, using this resource guide as a 'gloves off' working document.

Family Relationships

Prepared by the Ontario Work Group

This guide examines the importance of the family in the development of an individual as documented in our literature. The book is divided into five sections according to genre and all selections are annotated with suggestions as to appropriate age levels. Recommendations for both group and individual study are included, as are review questions, seminar and essay topics, a bibliography and a list of films suitable for correlation with the literature discussed. The sections are:

1. THE NOVEL
   Topics: family dynasty; the family from a woman's viewpoint; the French Canadian and Jewish family and other ethnic groups.
2. THE SHORT STORY
   Topics: family as status symbol; marital relations; parent-child relations; grandparent and grandchild and family estrangement.
3. POETRY
   Topics: the traditional family; married couples; alienation within the family; parent-child relations; children; tributes to parents and grandparents.
4. PLAYS
   Selections in this grouping reflect the changing roles and behaviour of the family in French Canada from the 1940's to the separatist crisis of the 1960's (plays by Gratien Gélinas); family alienation and the plight of the Indian in contemporary society (plays by George Ryga); alienation and intra-family hostility (plays by David French).
5. FILMS
   Topics: old age; youth; French Canadian families; other ethnic groups; social problems and family tensions.

Quebec Literature in Translation

Prepared by the Quebec Work Group

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Marie-Josée Dupuis
Jill Gardiner
Bob Morrison
Nick Paulini
Gilbert Plaw

The guide is arranged chronologically to illustrate the evolution of the literature of French Quebec through the following phases:

1. The period prior to World War II, focussing on one principal concern evident among writers of that period: the relationship of the people to their land and traditional values.
2. The period 1939-1960 characterized by the growing urbanization of the land and an increased questioning of traditional values.
3. 1960 to the present, a period of emerging self-awareness, frequent rejection of old values and a newly articulated nationalism.

The guide is divided according to genre:

1. The Novel – four core works and a list of supplementary readings.
2. Short Story – twelve selections plus a list of additional readings.
3. Poetry – an extensive reading list subdivided into four chronological units.
4. Drama – discussions of five contemporary plays.
5. Non-Fiction – three autobiographical works.

Accompanying these sections is a bibliography and a highly informative essay by Sheila Fischman that provides background and context for the topic.

Images of Biculturalism

Prepared by the Quebec Work Group

This guide offers a list of readings which illustrate how the two major linguistic groups of Quebec – English and French – view each other. The guide is organized into three main sections:

1. PROSE
   Twelve core works (short stories, drama, novels, non-fiction) and a list of supplementary readings arranged chronologically to indicate the evolutionary nature of the various viewpoints. The supplementary readings are arranged alphabetically by author. All works have been annotated in detail.
2. POETRY
   Focuses almost entirely on the Anglophone view of the French Quebecker (French Canadian poetry is dealt with extensively in the other Quebec resource guide). The introduction suggests several thematic approaches to the material chosen, the readings themselves are arranged alphabetically by author and are annotated in considerable detail.
3. BIBLIOGRAPHY
   Contains selected references to readings and sources for political and social background to the theme.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

This guide has been prepared, like all others in our series, to provide both maximum information and flexibility for classroom adaptability. Teachers are therefore encouraged to select and use the guide for their own specific teaching situations. Several approaches are possible: for instance, the material may be used for a full course tracing, over a period of time, the respective views of Quebec's two major linguistic and cultural groups. In this case core works would be assigned as compulsory reading, with poetry and supplementary reading assigned as the teacher sees fit. The main aims might be to determine how these views have altered in recent years, if at all, or else to approach the current issues of contention: separatism, Bill 22,

or the Parti Quebecois language policy. Alternatively, selections might be used as readings for courses only part of which are devoted to a study of Quebec literature – perhaps as a study of a minority group; as a background to the social unrest of the sixties and seventies; as readings in conjunction with a course in the history of social studies; or as a part-course in comparative literature.

Social Realism

Prepared by the Atlantic Work Group

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Evelyn MacLure (P.E.I.)
Mike McCarthy (Nfld.)
Peter Pacey (N.B.)

Best suited to students in the last two years of high school, this guide encourages student consideration of the cause and effect relationships of twentieth-century problems, the various views of man's relationship to the environment and the realistic methods that have come to be used in presenting these social themes.

The materials chosen in no way constitute an inclusive list but are considered to be more than adequate as an introduction to a variety of possible encounters with this literary genre. The selections have been chosen for their representative qualities both of the time under consideration and the social problems dealt with – they cover all genres and most have been used successfully in our school system.

Due to the pessimistic nature of much of this material it is recommended that this guide not be treated as a full course, or

even as a semester topic, unless other literary styles and ideas are included. It is also advised that teachers take advantage of the guide's flexibility and divide it into shorter segments interspersed with other related topics. A simple pattern might consist of:

1. social realism and the Depression
2. social satire
3. the 'Sunshine School' (e.g. L.M. Montgomery and M. de la Roche)
4. realistic and non-realistic characters
5. optimistic and pessimistic views of man

The guide is divided into five sections:

1. SUGGESTED APPROACHES TO REALISM
2. SOCIAL REALISM IN A WORLD CONTEXT
   An historical outline of the transition from romanticism, through naturalism to realism; the influence of major figures; and the complex nature of realism both as a philosophic and literary movement growing especially out of European and American traditions.
3. SOCIAL REALISM AND CANADIAN LITERATURE
   A general survey of the major trends and themes as they find their place in the literature of Canada.
4. CORE UNIT
   Presents the major writers and works of Canadian social realism illustrating the manner in which social issues inform the literary characteristics of this genre. Given the scope of this material teachers are permitted a wide range of possible approaches: historical, thematic and analytical.
5. SAMPLE SUB-THEMES IN SOCIAL REALISM
   Presents brief units on the sub-themes of regionalism (Atlantic), native peoples, social satire and bilingualism. They are intended to illustrate the kind of unit which a teacher might prepare on similar realistic themes. Since the unit would constitute only a section of a year's work, the listings are again representative rather than exhaustive.

Women in Canadian Literature

Prepared by the Atlantic Work Group

The topic has been broken down into a number of sub-themes to facilitate the teaching of shorter units.

1. IMAGES OF WOMEN IN EARLY CANADIAN LITERATURE
   Examines a variety of images ranging from the diminutive, patronizing and satirical, to the dominant individuality of such pioneer women as Catherine Parr Traill and Susanna Moodie.
2. SOCIETAL ROLES
   This section provides an opportunity to examine any or all of the following aspects: historical changes in women's roles; causes and effects of role change; comparison of masculine and feminine viewpoints of these roles and their evolution.
3. EMERGING WOMEN
   Explores the manifold processes of female emergence – the abandoning of old roles and the free choice of new ones. Many aspects of the 'Societal Roles' sub-theme blend into this topic. In addition, this section examines the psychological changes involved in a girl's maturation to womanhood as evidenced in recent literature.
4. WOMEN WRITERS
   Notes on Moodie, Carr, McClung, Montgomery, de la Roche, Wilson, Ostenso, Roy, Livesay, Hébert, Laurence, Atwood and Munro.

For each section the list of materials is far greater than can or should be used within the scope of an individual course. The range provides a broad historical perspective as well as a sampling of many points of view and literary forms. Many selections are suitable only for senior high school students.

As well as the above sectional arrangement, the guide offers a number of suggested approaches to implementation: historical perspective; thematic approach; examination of literary technique; critical evaluation of a single author; and comparative and contrastive methods.

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